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Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities

Statement submitted by the Institute of International Social Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2005/100.

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Focus of our approach in achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Through our experience over the past few years, after the adoption of the Goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, it is apparent that civil societies, being major players in the implementation of these goals, have not received a methodology to evaluate the achievement of the MDGs. Although, on paper, partnership is encouraged, it is getting difficult to work out partnerships as clashing interests between Institutions interfere with such possibilities.

It is therefore recommended that the Economic and Social Council come out with a methodology to evaluate the work of member nations and civil society or implementing agencies annually, or on any other accepted basis, for assessing the progress made in the field of the MDGs.

The module could be worked out through recommendations and discussions of various member nations, civil society organizations and intergovernmental agencies. Mere support for MDGs and promoting that implementation, without any process of internal and external evaluation, which would provide a universal and uniform set of minimum common parameters, could make their achievement difficult for the players of social progress.

To make the MDGs a realization, we recommend that an evaluating committee be set up by the Council, with representation from all sectors relevant to the process of tracking the progress of nations.

As inequality exists in today's world owing to cultural disparities and a feeling of identity crisis, it would be also useful to include protection of indigenous cultures as an additional MDG or an extension of any one of the MDGs, namely 3 or 8. This would ensure that member nations handle minority issues more sensitively than they do presently. The dominance of mainstream cultures invading and eroding ethnic cultures would be sizeably reduced and help the global community to have a more diverse input in today's polarized world. Terrorism would be much more controlled.

The most important aspect that has not been given proper recognition and place in the MDGs and their implementation is the inculcation of human and spiritual values. Without these values there cannot be a peaceful and progressive world as corruption and other vices will eat into the progress that is endeavoured by all concerned. It is essential that the concept and practice of values be grafted onto every aspect of life on this planet to usher in peace, prosperity and development for humankind. Values help in reduction in resource leakage, promoting efficiency in governance of daily social activities by the members of the society. Values ensure higher mental sensitivity, appreciation of one another's sentiments and a judicious mindset for any activity, resulting in fewer immoral actions.

We would like to seize the opportunity to place our recommendations in the high-level segment for the above-mentioned issues.

Though the MDGs are well thought out goals set for member nations to follow, they are often too theoretical for implementation as they do not mention human relations with respect to human rights and cultural protection.

We would like certain adaptations in the MDGs so that they become more suited to societies made up of human beings who have minds and hearts that dictate their actions, rather than societies that are seen as impersonal units of civilization.

The past United Nations conferences on sustainable development at Copenhagen and Johannesburg, status of women at Beijing, the special session on HIV/AIDS in New York, etc. have listed recommendations for a better world and served as precursors to the MDGs but there has been a lack of minimum common modules for implementation of the recommendations, giving the agencies the opportunity to interpret the recommendations according to their respective understanding, bringing about a huge difference in outcome and methodology of implementation by member nations, and creating clashes between them.

The present wars and acts of terrorism are mostly fallouts of such lacunae and hence the Council needs to work out a solution for making the MDGs more comprehensive and pragmatic through guidelines of implementation and parameters of evaluation.

MDGs need to be also understood by the administrations of member nations in totality. They lack adequate promotion within the policymaking bodies of member nations. Without adequate dissemination of information, the 2015 target for achieving the MDGs by member nations will be far from a reality, based on the extent of commitments that have been made.